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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**A position paper arising out of the
White Paper**

on

Human Resources Development

Presented by

**The Honourable Raymond A. Speaker
Government of Alberta**

April, 1969

"The Government of Alberta has committed itself to the provision of services which will foster the maximum development of each individual's potential and, at the same time, ensure that regardless of status, no resident of the province will lack the necessities of life."

—A White Paper on Human Resources Development, page 83
The Government of Alberta

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most complex tasks facing society today is the improvement of existing social welfare methods and the creation of new programs to cope with social problems. Many of the traditional programs are no longer effectively meeting the needs of our people.

Historically, the family and the local community attempted to assume full responsibility for children without parents capable or willing to care for them, the poor, the sick, the disabled and the aged. Members of the community shared their concerns and helped each other to the best of their ability. Much was accomplished, yet much could not be done. With the growth of population, urbanization, mobility and the many other factors characterizing our modern technological society concern for the needs of others could not always be met on an individual basis. Those who were charitable people in their community on a personal basis were faced with social and economic concern for thousands of individuals. New approaches had to be developed to cope with social problems of magnitude. Church organizations, private and public agencies responded to part of the need. As responsibility changed hands it became even more difficult for individuals to remain personally aware of and concerned for their fellow citizens. One of the perplexing problems facing our society is how to bring our traditional personal concern to the large scale problems of the present.

It is not the intent of this paper to examine in depth the part played by industrialization, urban growth, technological advance, the lessening of kinship bonds, or the many other factors that have contributed to the social problems facing our society.

The purpose of this paper is to initiate further steps to be taken by the provincial government in order to create a climate for social development.

II. CONTEMPORARY WELFARE

The Scope of Welfare

Who are the people receiving 'welfare'? In the broadest sense all of us at one time or another have received some government assistance. Educational grants, farm subsidies, hospital grants, government subsidies to industries and many others have touched our lives. Many thousands of

Alberta residents receive federal old age pensions and family allowances. In the more narrow sense of help for an individual or a family through a crisis period, an examination will show a wide diversity of people are receiving assistance. In Alberta we estimate that one quarter of all social allowance recipients fall within the category of the aged. As more effective and inclusive pension schemes are developed this group may decline, although an increasing number of aged persons eligible for assistance can be foreseen. One third are women with dependent children. This category includes widows, separated or divorced mothers and those whose common-law relationship has terminated. The medically certified mentally or physically disabled form the third category at 31 per cent. The remaining 11 per cent may be classified as unemployed persons capable of working, although perhaps not as able to compete in the labor market as the average person currently employed. Approximately 21,000 Alberta families were receiving Social Allowance at December 31st, 1968.

Over 7,000 children are permanent and temporary wards of the Crown, for whom future planning is the responsibility of the Department of Public Welfare. These children may come into the Department's care for many reasons: surrender by the unmarried mother, family breakdown by reason of inadequacy, misfortune or unwillingness to assume responsibility. Someone must provide effective care, treatment if necessary, and the opportunity for these children to become productive and healthy citizens.

Many others require care and assistance—the marginal farmer, the Metis settler, the student, the emotionally disturbed, to cite examples. Some indication of the scope of the present programs of the Department of Public Welfare can be gained when one realizes that over 100,000 persons, foster parents, adoptive couples, pensioners and so on, or approximately 7 per cent of the citizens of Alberta are directly affected by the services provided.

Clearly, unfortunate circumstances may overtake anyone, particularly the most vulnerable: the aged, the young, the physically or mentally handicapped. Certainly some may lack initiative. Many more lack opportunity and the good fortune to be healthy and secure.

Society has for some time viewed the recipient of social allowance without regard for his family. Many have recommended reducing the cost of financial aid by cutting off recipients from social allowance. Experience has shown, however, that arbitrary removal of a potential bread-winner from financial assistance creates more problems and in the long run costs society more money than a developmental approach. The recipient must be viewed in terms of his social responsibilities to his wife, children and community. Perhaps one of the first steps in recognition of this is a better public understanding of the needs and circumstances of recipients.

The Problems of Today

More and more families in North America find themselves within or nearing the poverty level. More and more family units are disintegrating through separation, desertion and divorce. More and more children are unwanted or neglected. Delinquency, if not rising, continues at an alarming rate. The gap between aspiration and realistic opportunity appears to be widening. The overwhelming difficulties experienced in major American cities in motivating and rehabilitating the third generation welfare recipient, the rise of ghetto culture with its attending frustration, disillusionment and violence must be avoided.

Alberta is fortunate both from the point of view that our problems have not evolved to an explosive stage, nor are the dimensions of our social problems unmanageable. Funds invested now will lessen the action required to cope with the social problems of the future. Society at all levels must recognize this reality and the responsibility that flows from it. In essence, society suffers from what might be termed social irresponsibility. This irresponsibility must be transformed into social responsibility.

What steps may now be taken? More effective procedures are needed. Creative methods of confronting social problems need to be established. Greater opportunity for development for those who can benefit must be provided. Programs must be assessed for effectiveness and if found wanting, redeveloped or terminated. Improved co-ordination of private,

municipal and provincial programs and resources must be achieved, and much more.

Paradoxically, the term and concept of 'welfare' has, in the minds of many, assumed the characterization of a static unimaginative system handing out money to lazy, indolent people. To many citizens 'welfare' often means hand-outs for undeserving people who could be working if they showed initiative. It is now apparent that present and emerging policies and programs designed to ameliorate social problems of individuals and families fall largely outside this more narrow, traditional concept. It is therefore necessary to employ a new concept which embodies this new approach. It is recognized that nothing is gained by simply substituting the new term social development for the term welfare. Words do not change a system, but policies and actions flowing from new concepts and ideas do.

The government appeals to the members of the Legislature and to the citizens they represent to participate and support the Social Development approach.

III. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

As an ideal concept social development visualizes adequate opportunity for individuals to grow according to their potential as socially responsible and economically productive members of society. This is the ideal that must guide the efforts of the Department of Social Development.

Social development is a dynamic process in which latent potential is transformed into active participation. Inherent in this process is the stimulation of the individual to accept his proper share of responsibility. Just as education visualizes man in his search of knowledge and wisdom, social development visualizes man in search of a balanced healthy relationship with others. One of its aims, therefore must be to build an environment conducive to the growth of healthy relationships among people, starting with relationships within the family and moving out into community.

It is fundamental to this concept that man is not only willing, but anxious to accept responsibility when he can successfully do so. Yet, growth towards social responsibility is predicted on the assurance of basic conditions of life—food, clothing, shelter, medical care and education. Once these conditions are assured, the real process of social development can proceed. This task is more subtle, time-consuming and complex than the provision of a basic living standard; it becomes the construction of a social environment in which responsibility will be encouraged and irresponsibility limited.

In any group of disadvantaged people, only those possessing extraordinary motivation, determination and ability are able to create their own opportunities in this competitive and rapidly changing society. Accordingly, our primary concern is to design conditions that provide adequate opportunities and facilitate the growth of a sense of responsibility in individuals.

Social development is not a task for government alone. Government must enlist the family, the community and the whole broad spectrum of voluntary groups that exist in our society. All must become part of a mutually supportive partnership in the dynamic process of the growth and development of individuals and the community.

It would be a mistake to focus too sharply on either the individual or the community—both are important. A community is as healthy or unhealthy as the people who comprise its parts. Let us remember that the quality of the individual's life is primarily dependent on the level of community understanding and concern, and the action taken to meet that concern.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW APPROACH

"The time has come for an explicit commitment of private and public energies toward facilitating, to the greatest extent possible, the free and creative development of every human being in the Province of Alberta. In other words, the time has come for humanitarian values and social concern to be registered in a much more positive and explicit way."

—A White Paper on Human Resources Development, page 25
The Government of Alberta.

A. Development as Distinct from Maintenance and Custody

The traditional approach of society tended to isolate the individual in difficulty. Many individuals were condemned to society's backwater. Isolated people fell even further behind as society became more complex and more demanding of skills and initiative. The difficulties experienced in attempting to rehabilitate the third generation non-participant in a developing society warrants notice. The developmental approach strengthens the individual, the community and its economy. The initial cost may be high, but the dividends in human and economic terms are greater. Not only must existing opportunities be brought within reach of those that are able to benefit, but new opportunities must be created.

To create a custodial system wherein families and individuals are to be simply maintained would be a tragic waste. Mere survival is insufficient both from the view of the individual and the community in which he lives.

Individuals with potential for rehabilitation and development must be provided with the opportunity to change. To fail in this is to compound the problem and to leave untouched a valuable asset to the community and the province.

The Department of Social Development will initiate or encourage the developmental approach by:

1. Creating new opportunities and assisting individuals and families to utilize resources in order that they may reach their potential. The creation of such programs as job opportunity, expanded training and retraining, and home management courses will be encouraged and more fully utilized where presently available.

2. Establishing in all programs of the department a climate which creates the greatest opportunity for individual development, economic self - sufficiency, and a healthy adjustment to the individual's social environment.

B. Emphasis on Rewarding Initiative and Action

"Due to deficiencies in knowledge and skills, many individuals are unemployed or underemployed and are therefore unable to earn incomes sufficient to provide adequately for themselves and their dependents. The Government will continue to meet the legitimate needs of such individuals and families and will encourage and assist them to become self-reliant through participation in retraining and adult education programs to equip them for available and more remunerative occupations."

—A White Paper on Human Resources Development, page 84,
The Government of Alberta

Society has not given sufficient recognition to the value of rewarding initiative and potential demonstrated by social welfare recipients. Ironically, these same characteristics receive high recognition and monetary reward when displayed by individuals in business and industry. Motivation must be encouraged, nurtured and rewarded.

Recipients of government funds with a high degree of potential for rehabilitation were, and to some extent still are, subject to the same program limitations as the recipient with little potential for improvement. Programs developed to provide basic income failed to differentiate between the recipient with desires and aspirations and the unmotivated. Relatively inflexible limits were set. Although the value to society, socially and financially, was great once dependency was overcome, little risk was undertaken. The need for a co-ordinated presentation of alternatives to the recipient has been evident for some time. Federal and provincial departments, corporations, private firms and many others have a variety of training and retraining schemes. All may be utilized more effectively.

We recognize that Canada's present income maintenance systems are imperfect. Yet in a federation changes in systems of this magnitude require the joint action of all provinces and the federal government. The province of Alberta will continue to provide leadership in seeking an adjustment to the needs test approach.

The Department of Social Development will emphasize initiative and motivation by:

- ✓ 1. Encouraging recipient and employers, financially and otherwise, to enable the recipient to become employed.
- ✓ 2. Promoting the development of opportunities for the recipient with the co-operation of business, industry and labor.
3. Developing and improving existing family support services and creating additional services in order to strengthen the family unit.
4. Creating or presenting to the recipient, to wards of the Crown and to others as many options for training, employment and upgrading as possible.
5. Establishing a climate of reward for initiative in all programs of the department.

C. Integration, Co-ordination and Efficiency of Services

"The Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada, municipal governments, and private agencies provide many hundreds of services designed to facilitate the development of Alberta's physical and human resources. These services will function efficiently and effectively only when the multiplicity of programs are interrelated and correlated with the needs of individuals, organizations and communities who are the recipients of these services."

—A White Paper on Human Resources Development, page 89,
The Government of Alberta.

Service systems and programs have had a tendency to develop as unrelated compartments independent of each other. In order to properly meet the needs of people a comprehensive series of services are required. Services must overlap as little as possible, and where necessary services do not exist they must be established.

Units within provincial, federal and municipal jurisdictions tend to segment programs in such a way that it is difficult to approach particular problems in a unified manner. Careful co-ordination will result in an integrated package of services capable of responding to the needs of those who are able to benefit from them.

More efficient administrative procedures must be established if the Department of Social Development is to keep pace with the growing complexity of social problems. Several major changes must be implemented in management, policy, procedure and training systems.

The Department of Social Development will take steps to co-ordinate services and increase efficiency by:

1. Undertaking a systematic approach to the solution of problems of providing existing services and the creation of new services.
2. Utilizing techniques such as cost benefit analysis and jurisdictional studies.
3. Encouraging studies of service delivery systems with a view to establishing co-ordination with voluntary and private agencies, municipal organizations, government departments and public agencies.
4. Rearranging branch structure to reflect the change in orientation with particular emphasis on family services and income security systems.
5. Establishing a more effective decision making procedure at regional level.
6. Implementing a more efficient method of providing rapid financial assistance and payment of accounts.
7. Developing a more effective staff training, development and orientation system as well as devising a more appropriate staff classification system.

D. Further Emphasis on Prevention

“The development of wholesome values and aspirations in an individual is dependent on stable and harmonious family and community life, especially during a child’s formative years. The Government therefore will continue to develop programs and services which will endeavor to assure every child a wholesome family and community environment. Such services include Preventive Social

Services Programs developed in co-operation with municipal authorities."

—A White Paper on Human Resources Development, page 84.
The Government of Alberta.

In recent years the Government of Alberta has pioneered in the area of prevention by the establishment of the Preventive Social Services Act, 1966. It cannot be disputed that steps designed to enhance individual and family life and to preclude breakdown or dependency upon public funds are the most critically important steps in any service-giving continuum. We remain convinced that positive results can be obtained through practical projects and services of a preventive nature. It must be made possible for as many children as are able to remain in their homes and to participate in a happy and healthy family life.

The returns from preventive services in terms of human values and economic gain are immeasurable. It is less costly to provide supportive services at an early stage than to care later for the casualties of family disintegration.

Municipal government initiative with provincial government financial and technical support has made bold strides. Effective homemaker services have developed and are presently enabling families to remain together during crisis situations such as illness or incarceration. Often this short term help means the difference between family adjustment and family disintegration. Day care centres have begun to effectively assist such people as the employed single parent. Family life education programs are currently working toward the strengthening of the family in a number of Alberta centres. In summary, a wide variety of community based social services have been established. Much remains to be done.

The Department of Social Development will continue to emphasize, develop and improve the efficiency of the preventive social service system by:

1. Ensuring that the character and range of preventive services meet the needs of the citizens of Alberta through analysis, improved data collection techniques and supportive services.
2. Continuing the emphasis and development of preventive social services at the municipal level.
3. Working toward a more efficient financial support system.

4. Continuing to co-operate and support the work of the voluntary sectors through the United Funds and Social Planning Councils.
5. Encouraging broad community co-operation and co-ordination between Social planning councils, school systems, church organizations and other community organizations.

E. Investment in Potential

"The Government of Alberta, in situations where individuals are financially incapable of assuming any part of the financial cost involved in acquiring essential services, will:

- Assume the full cost when the individual's inability to contribute is due to physical disability or other causes beyond his control.*
- Assist, to the extent required, those temporarily unable to assume the cost of essential services in whole or in part.*
- Develop and implement programs to assist such individuals in improving their income position."*

—A White Paper on Human Resources Development, page 66,
The Government of Alberta.

Society in general has looked upon the individual who has a specific deficiency or impediment as totally incapable of contributing to society. But the blind, the child of low mental capacity, the physically disabled have shown that with some assistance they too are able to participate in the community. This potential must be encouraged and developed where possible. A deficiency in one area does not preclude a contribution in others.

Physical age does not eliminate the capacity to contribute. The special rapport between the aged and the young supported by the experience of a lifetime is itself an important part of our time. Many look upon pensions and other assistance programs as charity or hand-outs. This attitude must be tempered with the realization that many have contributed to society throughout productive lifetimes and are still able to contribute much to their families, their communities and their province.

In every society there are some, who, for a variety of causes, cannot contribute to or benefit from rehabilitation. These children and adults must be provided with the necessary medical and social care at a standard consistent with society's desire for human dignity. The goal is clearly defined—the difficulty of prioritizing services must still be faced.

The Department of Social Development will place emphasis on the investment in potential by:

1. Providing such encouragement as may be possible, having regard to priorities for increased opportunities for all individuals to reach their potential.
2. Continuing to provide funds and housing to enable the aged or infirm to live in circumstances consistent with human dignity.
3. Supporting those working with the aged to discover ways and means of utilizing their capacity to contribute to our society.

F. Citizen Participation

"The most beneficial social policies and programs, governmental and non-governmental, will result when those affected participate in the planning, decision-making and implementation. Thus, every effort must be made to help develop people's capacity for such participation."

—Social Policies for Canada, Part I.
A Statement by the Canadian Welfare Council.

The expansion of programs and services and the rise in the complexity of these services has diminished citizen participation. This unfortunate result is causing concern in many governments, yet few will deny the positive results that flow from an effective partnership between the citizen and his government. Governments cannot or should not be expected to assume responsibility for that which can remain a family or community responsibility.

Any system of citizen involvement must be predicated upon a sound, accurate and current understanding of programs, policies and procedures utilized by the Department of Social Development. Obviously, active and effective methods must be found to efficiently provide citizens of the province with information about the new department. Providing information is not, however, enough. All individuals in the province cannot be expected to respond and participate. To charge the new department with the responsibility of providing detailed, accurate and complex information to every citizen would be an unreasonable expectation. The task will be, therefore, to provide all citizens with clear descriptions of existing programs and policies and to provide

groups such as planning councils, municipal governments and others with an understanding of the intricacies of the programs and future goals.

There is another area of citizen participation that should be emphasized: the direct involvement of the citizen in carrying out the programs of the department. The Province of Alberta has at present approximately 1,300 foster homes providing exceptional care and guidance to the children placed in their care. Group home parents, adoptive couples and many others continue to provide an invaluable resource for the present care and future security of children.

It is most important that communication between the community and the new department be expanded and that new channels be opened. Increased communication is a prerequisite to more appropriate programs.

Lastly, it is important to stress the value of involving those who receive the services of the department in the design, development, adjustment and implementation of programs. The participation of recipients of services will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programs designed for their use.

The Department of Social Development will further develop citizen participation by:

1. Providing the citizens of the province with accurate information about the policies, programs and social problems affecting the people of Alberta.
2. Systematically creating and maintaining a process of analysis of programs and consultation with the organizations in our society primarily concerned with social development.
3. Continuing to reorganize and to develop a public awareness of the importance and effectiveness of citizen involvement in the programs of the department.
4. Recognizing the unique contribution that may be made by recipients of departmental services and establishing new methods of tapping this resource.

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